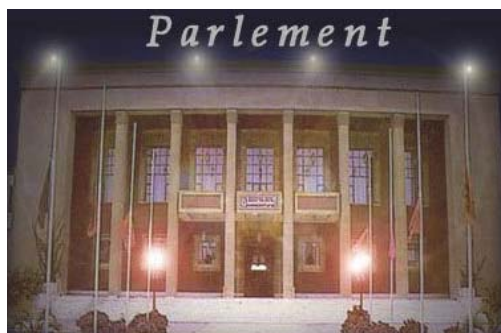




*Date: September 23, 2005*

## HIGHLIGHTS FROM MOROCCO

### Political Party Bill Debate



On Wednesday, September, 14<sup>th</sup>, the USAID Parliament Support Project brought together an unprecedented group of over 60 people that included members of parliament (18 from the Chamber of Representatives and 17 from the Chamber of Counselors), political figures, academics and specialists.

Facilitated by the leaders of the interior committees in both chambers, the objective of this activity was to provide technical information that would enhance the interior committees MPs capacity in policy analysis of the political party bill currently under review in parliament.

A professor of constitutional law at the Rabat-Souissi University provided the audience with an in-depth comparative perspective and analysis of the political party bill. The primary result of this activity was to actively and effectively engage members of parliament key actors in the policy analysis process.

### Herbal and Medicinal Plants Workshop

The Morocco Agricultural Partnerships for Productivity and Prosperity (AP3) initiative, in conjunction with USAID/Morocco Integrated Agriculture and Agribusiness program, was launched Tuesday September 21, 2005 in Fès with the Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Fishing. Mission Director emphasized the importance of the agriculture sector within USAID/Morocco strategy and the Government of Morocco (GOM) priorities in the context of the US-Morocco FTA, other trade agreements, and the GOM's National Initiative for Human Development (INDH). She also highlighted the need to identify alternatives for small and medium farmers who will need to shift from cereal production to high value non-traditional crop alternatives like medicinal plants.



This one-year pilot project, funded by USAID/Morocco and the EGAT Bureau will seek potential for creating work and improving lives in rural areas of Morocco through the medicinal plants sector, a value chain with a huge potential in Morocco. Project will be working with the Moroccan medicinal plants business community (farmers, agribusiness associations, universities etc.) to address the opportunities and constraints facing

the development of the medicinal plants sector, improve product(s) promotion and identify potential local and foreign partners and investors, develop partnerships and collaboration between the public sector, private sector, and universities in Morocco and the region.

### Intern Promotes USAID in Chicago

Lindsay Olson, a sophomore at the University of Illinois, shared details of her internship experience in Morocco this summer with a Chicago newspaper. She underlined cultural differences between Moroccan and American women and other personal experiences in the country. Lindsay also described grassroots work done by USAID to help educate children in deprived rural areas.

In addition to the useful help she provided to short-staffed teams for several weeks in Morocco, Lindsay undoubtedly helped USAID public diplomacy efforts in her home town, Chicago.



## Eye on Morocco

### **King Launches Program for Generalizing ICT in Education**

Last Thursday, King Mohammed VI kicked off the national program of generalizing information and communication technologies (ICT) in education. This three-year program will cost about \$11 million and aims at providing schools (over 8,600 schools and high schools) all over the country with internet-connected multi-media rooms by 2008. Infrastructure, teacher training and the development of pedagogical content are part of the national program.

Over 100,000 computers will be purchased and installed in the 2005-2006 school year, serving 75% of middle and high schools and 25% of primary schools.

About 6.5 million students were enrolled at the different education levels, including 5.88 million in primary and middle schools (2.17 million of whom are female, and 2.25 million are enrolled in rural area). According to the national education ministry, enrollment rates for children aged 6 has exceeded 90% and is expected to reach 97% by 2009, thanks primarily to the education reform, launched five years ago to generalize schooling.

Note that USAID supports this national program through the **Last Mile Initiative**, which provides multi-media centers in rural middle schools and teacher training in four regions of the country.



### Events for September/October 2005:

- CSSF and Cisco Graduation Ceremonies
- Launching of two new USAID-funded websites: Rural Tourism and Investment Promotion
- Regional Agriculture & Agribusiness Workshops in Berkane (9/27), Meknes (9/29) and Kenitra (10/4)
- Democracy Assistance Dialogue (10/1-3)
- Launching the New Business Opportunities and the Business Environment programs
- Democracy/Governance and Economic Growth roundtables with USAID partners